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ABSTRACT

A survey of agencies and persons involved with the education of handicapped students in Alaska was undertaken to examine state practices in teacher certification. A review of the literature on such issues as accreditation, certification, endorsement and competency based certification across the country was performed. Alaska state laws and regulations regarding certification procedures are reviewed. Results of the surveys supported the need for a statewide special education certification program, changes in recertification requirements, less emphasis on categorical organization of teacher education programs, regular education exposure for special education teachers, examination of certification waiver, more clear articulation of the relationship between inservice training and recertification, and more consumer involvement in Alaska's program accreditation process. (CL)

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AUTHOR ABSTRACT
(To Accompany Document Submitted to ERIC/IR)

Author: Marilyn Kay Johnson

Title: Issues and Opinions on Special Education Certification
in the State of Alaska

Abstract (up to 200 words):

This is a report originally proposed by a personnel training consortium to clarify issues and opinions related to special education certification in Alaska. Information in the report is the result of an instate survey of agencies and persons having direct dealings with special education certification and a review of the literature for a consensus on terminology. Current practices in Alaska are described and future directions are recommended.

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ISSUES AND OPINIONS ON
SPECIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION IN THE
STATE OF ALASKA

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A Paper Proposed by a
Subcommittee of
Special Education Consortium Committee
for the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development in Alaska

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Procedures	2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	4
Terms	4
Accreditation	5
Certification	7
CURRENT PRACTICES IN ALASKA	9
Issuance of Certificates	9
Waivers	10
Renewal	11
Reciprocity	11
Accreditation	11
UAA Special Education Program	13
RESPONSES TO LETTERS	16
A Statewide Special Education Certification Program	16
Recertification	17
Organization of Teacher Training Programs	17
Regular Education Exposure for Special Education Teachers	18
Certification Waivers for Special Education Teachers . . .	19
The Relationship of Hiring Practices to Certification . .	20
The Relationship of Inservice Training to Certification and/or Recertification	21
Development of Certification Programs in Alaska	21
CONCLUSION	24
SELECTED REFERENCES	26

INTRODUCTION

Special Education teacher certification in Alaska is a very confused issue. For example, "certification" or licensure of an individual to practice teaching skills in the classroom is often confused with "accreditation" which is program authorization given to an institution of higher education to deliver a prescribed set of courses based upon state and/or national standards. The Special Education Consortium Committee for the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development in Alaska since its inception in 1977 has had many questions concerning basic concepts, issues and practices related to special education certification. As a final project and in response to a desire for more information on the subject, a subcommittee of the Special Education Consortium obtained funding from Alaska Department of Education through a contract with the Northern Institute to continue the study of Special Education certification in Alaska. The subcommittee attempted to assess the understanding of the issues associated with certification, obtain opinions from various parties concerned with certification and do a brief review of the literature related to Special Education certification. It was the committee's hope that some consensus could be arrived at which might guide future State planning for Special Education certification.

The following document reflects the work of the subcommittee to arrive at pertinent issues and opinions from various sources in Alaska. Initially a set of questions was prepared and sent to identified individuals, groups, and agencies in the state which hold special education certification as a concern. A brief review of the literature available on the subject was summarized and recommendations including future issues to be explored were isolated.

The committee sees this final report as an initial step in exploring the issues of special education certification in Alaska. All issues isolated should be studied in depth before future decisions are made.

Procedures

The original subcommittee of four members generated many questions related to Special Education teacher certification. These questions were subdivided into fact and opinion points to be covered in a letter to agencies, organizations, institutions of higher education and school district representatives. Ten recipients were sent individual letters with specific questions that the committee members felt could best be answered by each group. Each group was requested to answer from four to fourteen questions with additional information sought by followup telephone calls and individual interviews. Letters were sent to the following groups:

Department of Education
Office of Certificates
Office of Exceptional Children
Teacher Education Onsite Review Team
Governor's Council for the Handicapped and Gifted

Alaska State Board of Education
The Northern Institute for Research Training and Development
The University of Alaska
 Anchorage Campus
 Fairbanks Campus
 Juneau Campus
Alaska Pacific University
Anchorage School District Personnel Office
Department of Special Education
Alaska Association of Special Education Administrators
Sheldon Jackson College

Responses were received from the Anchorage School District, Department of Education, Sheldon Jackson College, University of Alaska, Anchorage, and the Alaska Association of Special Education Administrators. Personal contact was made with a Governor's Council representative. No responses were received from the State Board of Education, other University of Alaska campuses, or Alaska Pacific University. The Northern Institute responded that they could not be of help in the survey because of limited manpower.

Several ERIC searches were pursued through the University of Alaska consortium library. An attempt was made to isolate some current literature related to both opinion and practice questions. In addition, the purpose of the searches was to gain a consensus in approaching the basic issue of certification including an understanding of the terminology and basic concepts. Alaska documents describing local practices were secured whenever possible. Attempts were made to use the most recent literature although the committee recognizes that new literature on the subject has come out since the final review was completed in July 1981.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of the literature concerning national practices in the areas of teacher certification and related issues revealed extreme variations in the use of terminology, degree of centralization, and use of accreditation authority. It was difficult to make generalizations about the subjects other than to note the great lack of uniformity. Most of the research raises questions rather than states solutions. The following terms were isolated as important for understanding the issues surrounding special education certification.

Terms

- Accreditation - recognition accorded to an institution by some agency which sets up standards and requirements. In Alaska this term applies only to institutions or to programs within an institution. Various states use the following terms to mean accreditation: approve, register, classify, certify.
- Certification - a process of legal sanction which authorizes the holder to perform specific services in that state. This term applies only to individuals. In various states certification is used synonymously with license.
- Endorsement - a notation indicating the areas in which a certificate holder is qualified to perform services.
- Generic or comprehensive certification - a process of legal sanction which authorizes the holder to perform Special Education services to any group of handicapped students. Fourteen states use the method. (Barresi, 1979)
- Categorical certification - a process of legal sanction which authorizes the holder to perform Special Education services only to a specified group of handicapped students, e.g., visually impaired, mentally retarded. Thirty-five states use this method. (Barresi, 1979)

Approved programs - those programs offered by regionally accredited training institutions which have been approved by the State Department of Education as meeting minimum requirements established by "Standards for State Approval of Teacher Education." (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1971)

Competency based certification - acceptance of a candidate for certification based, not on academic work or institutional endorsement but on demonstrated competence. While this was mentioned in the literature as a favored and more reliable method it was only infrequently used and only for parts of programs. The questions of who judges the demonstration and how the demonstration is realistically arranged presented major problems.

Reciprocity - a system under which a teacher certified in one state is automatically qualified for a certificate in another state.

Institutional recommendation - refers to the institution of higher learning's statement that a student has successfully completed their approved program.

Accreditation

One of the most frequently encountered problems concerned the relationship of teacher certification to institution accreditation. Accreditation here is used to mean recognition of competency in colleges and universities; a variety of states use any one of several synonymous terms. Accreditation serves to show that certain institutions have met certain predetermined standards. In some states these standards are determined and judged by the State Department of Education, in others accreditation is delegated to professional agencies.

In either case a major issue becomes the competence of the evaluating body as well as the procedural steps taken to accredit programs. In response to a questionnaire concerning accreditation

practices, thirty-five states reported that one step was the establishment of criteria for evaluation. Thirty-seven states indicated that they send teams to inspect institutions. Thirty-three states published a list of accredited or approved institutions. Thirty-four states reported making a periodic review of accredited institutions in the state. Twenty-six states reported using all four steps. When asked how often the schools are evaluated for accreditation, fifteen reported every five years; sixteen reported "indefinitely;" two reported annually; and the rest varied between one and ten years. (Mayor, 1965)

It was evident that there were no standards or procedures accepted by all states in the selection of institutions for accreditation. Likewise, there were no generally accepted qualifications and criteria for judging the institutions to be placed on the approved lists of accredited institutions. Even the meaning of the lists themselves was not uniform.

Usually a state's list of accredited institutions falls under one of the following three categories (Mayor, 1965):

1. ALL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON THE LIST WERE APPROVED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING
If an institution was approved for anything, and if it offers the courses required for certification, then it was authorized to prepare teachers.
2. ALL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON THE LIST WERE APPROVED FOR TEACHER EDUCATION
A listed institution may prepare students for any teaching position for which a certificate was issued, provided it offered the courses required for those certificates.

3. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON THE LIST WERE APPROVED FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

Each institution listed must have separate approval for each program it offered for such positions as elementary school teacher, secondary school teacher, school administrator, special education teacher.

What became obvious in a discussion of accreditation was the implication that accreditation procedures had for the certifying or licensing of personnel. If the total accreditation system was not based on an equitable set of criteria and procedures throughout the states or even within a state then certification could not be fairly based either. When accreditation was not based on precise quality distinctions then candidates for certification were given or denied the right to teach on some basis other than quality.

Certification

State requirements for certification cover a range from states which list specific courses titles to be taken within a specified number of semester hours to states which rely solely on endorsement by given institutions. For example, to teach visually impaired students, Washington D.C. required only a B.A. or B.S. in elementary or secondary education; Maine has no specific requirements; while California requires a Master's Degree plus nine specific courses including a practicum with visually impaired students. (Spungin, 1976)

The literature revealed many such areas of discrepancy between states, which gave rise to a number of broad issues to be dealt with in the matter of Special Education teacher certification.

1. Should certification be issued categorical or comprehensive. Should the state specify the area of Special Education in which an individual was prepared to work (e.g., mental retardation, learning disabilities) when certifying or should the state acknowledge only that the candidate had approved Special Education training and leave the evaluation of the training to the hiring district? (Belch, 1979; Vidaurri, 1976)
2. When a state adopted an "approved program" approach to accreditation was it not the program instead of the personal competence of the individual that was certified?
3. Should the state be allowed to dictate what colleges should teach?
4. If states move away from requiring specific coursework toward competency-based certification, how can decisions about individuals be fairly made?
5. With such variety in standards and procedures how can out-of-state teachers be certified by a "receiving" state? Is reciprocity fair or even possible at this time?
6. What should be the relationship between regular education and Special Education in the certifying process? Should Special Education be considered a step beyond regular education or was it better considered a field in itself? (Barresi, 1979)
7. How should the new need for certifying preschool Special Education teachers be met? (Hirshoren, 1977)

CURRENT PRACTICES IN ALASKA

Issuance of Certificates

At the present time in Alaska in order to receive certification in Special Education one submits the following information to the Department of Education, Juneau:

1. An application form where one requests endorsements for each area of specialization, e.g., elementary, special education, guidance.
2. A recommendation from a training institution. A separate recommendation is required for each endorsement requested.
3. A fee
4. Official transcripts which the Department of Education stated that it did not evaluate, but relied solely upon the recommendations of the training institution.
5. Validation of recency credits to verify that at least six of the credits listed on the transcripts were completed within five years of the date of application.

The items above were judged according to one of the following two plans:

Plan 1 (a) completed an approved teacher education program in Alaska
 (b) had a bachelor's degree
 (c) had a recommendation from the preparing institution
 (d) had recency credit

Plan 2 (a) completed a comparable program in another state
 (b) was recommended by the preparing institution
 (c) had recency credit

The certificate issued is called "Type A Regular" and marked "K-12 Spec Ed", followed by one or more of the following specialties:

Learning Disabilities
Mental Retardation
Physically Handicapped
Resource
Speech and Hearing
Visually Handicapped
Emotionally Disturbed
Deaf

The state-noted specialization does not restrict the areas in which a certificate holder can work. It simply specifies the area of specialization for which the holder was trained. Although the certificate looks like a categorical certification, it was, in fact, a comprehensive certificate for all practical purposes (see Terms section).

Waivers

Currently the Complied School Laws of Alaska (Department of Education, September, 1980) states that no person shall be employed to teach a class of exceptional children unless he/she possesses a valid teacher certificate and, in addition, such training as the department may require by regulations. However, according to the Special Education Handbook currently in use (1978) it is possible for non-certified personnel to teach Special Education classes with only the approval of the Department of Education. This approval is based on the following being submitted in writing to the Department of Education.

1. A description of the teacher training program the applicant is enrolled in that will lead to certification appropriate to their assignment.
2. An indication that the applicant would complete the training program as described in three years or less.
3. Confirmation of said enrollment from an accredited institution of higher education.
4. A letter from the Superintendent of the local education agency describing the competencies of the teacher in question to instruct exceptional children and indicated his/her approval of the professional assignment and his/her personal assurances that all other avenues of teacher recruitment have been exhausted.
5. As required by AS 14.20.010, applications for departmental approval for Special Education endorsement, must be completed within three months from the date of employment.

Also stated in the Compiled School Laws of Alaska, 1980 was another possibility of a limited waiver of qualification. Section 14.30.260 stated "The school board for a district or regional educational attendance area may waive part of the qualifications for teachers as set out in Section 250 of this chapter, if necessary, during the first school year special services are offered in the district or area." (p. 78)

Renewal

Renewal of the Special Education certificate must be requested every five years. An application, a fee, and a copy of transcripts showing recency credits (6 credits) must be submitted to the Department of Education. Within these 6 credits up to three hours of non-academic credit are allowed. The remaining three credits could be in any subject at any level; graduate level work is not required. The regulations stated that Continuing Education Units were not acceptable as recency credits. The practice of obtaining recency credit by prior agreement with the Department of Education for professional activities such as conference attendance is available but infrequently used.

Reciprocity

Alaska has reciprocity with no other state. Out-of-state applicants must fulfill the requirements according to Plan 2. (See Section Issuance of Certificate)

Accreditation

The state of Alaska utilized NSDTEC standards for developing and evaluating in-state training programs. The Department of Education

reviewed Alaska institutions of higher education through the use of a team made up of Department of Education personnel, teachers, administrators and higher education faculty. The Teacher Education On-site Review Team (TEORT) made recommendations for program approval and changes to the State Board of Education. The 1981 edition of the Minimum Standards for Special Education Programs developed by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification appears below (pp. 43-47).

3.5.12 EXCEPTIONAL (HANDICAPPED) CHILDREN. The following standards pertain to programs for preparing teachers of exceptional children at any grade level--preschool through grade 12. Comprehensive Standards applicable to all areas of special education are designed to prepare an individual to assist mildly and moderately handicapped children enrolled in the regular school and provide a range of educational services excluding those requiring more extensive specialist training, i.e., speech pathology, audiology, and for dealing with severe intellectual, physical, emotional, and learning problems. (Adopted June 18, 1980.)

Specialized standards for communicative disorders, early childhood handicapped, emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, learning disabilities, mentally retarded, physically handicapped, and visually impaired follow this subsection.

STANDARD I The program shall require demonstrated competence in the selection, administration and interpretation of formal and informal techniques and instruments to assess a child's educational development (academic, social, cognitive, and physical), focusing on normal growth and development and the implications of deviations from these patterns.

STANDARD II The program shall require demonstrated competence in the development, implementation, and evaluation of a variety of sequentially ordered instructional approaches for exceptional children which accommodate their academic, social, cognitive, and physical needs.

STANDARD III The program shall require demonstrated competence in communicating with parents, children, and other professionals relative to the assessment of a child's academic, social, cognitive, and physical functioning and the subsequent planning, development, and implementation of the child's program.

STANDARD IV The program shall require demonstrated competence in (a) identifying, selecting, and using resource agencies for improving and strengthening the educational program for exceptional children and (b) identifying, selecting, and using commercially and teacher-made media and materials for improving and strengthening programs for exceptional children.

STANDARD VI The program shall require experiences in making appropriate adaptations in the environment, equipment, and/or devices needed to organize a variety of individual and small group learning activities.

STANDARD VII The program shall require demonstrated competence in the control and management of behavior in the classroom using a variety of techniques based upon behavioral, cognitive, and humanistic psychological theories.

STANDARD VIII The program shall require demonstrated competence in (a) an understanding of national, state, and local laws, policies, and procedures affecting the handicapped; (b) developing a system for organizing and maintaining student records; and (c) developing and maintaining a resource file for planning, implementing, and evaluating programs for exceptional children.

Learning Disabilities

STANDARD I The program shall require study of learning theory, educational psychology, psychological testing, and diagnosis and correction of learning disabilities.

STANDARD II The program shall require study designed to provide competence in remediation in basic skills, teaching of reading, and curriculum development for students with learning disabilities (such as dyslexia, perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, and developmental aphasia).

STANDARD III The program shall require study of group dynamics, interviewing and counseling techniques, and community resources.

UAA Special Education Program

The only Special Education training program in Alaska is at the University of Alaska, Anchorage and serves the urban community of Anchorage, and the communities of Kenai, Kodiak and Fairbanks as part

of a federally supported outreach program. Individuals from all over Alaska attend the summer program in Special Education at University of Alaska, Anchorage and either complete the program over a series of summers or transfer credits to other universities outside the state of Alaska.

The present University of Alaska, Anchorage graduate program recommends for certification in the area of Learning Disabilities. The certificate is based on the prerequisite of a Type A certificate in elementary or secondary education. Although the training program separated course work according to initial teaching certificates and program emphasis at the elementary or secondary level, the state continues to issue certificates with K-12 endorsement. The program which holds unconditional approval for a five year period beginning with Fall, 1981 is described below:

Learning Disabilities --- Elementary and Secondary Emphasis

Endorsement Requirements 1980-1981

1. Admission to the Graduate Program and Special Education Program.
2. Possession of a teaching certificate for the elementary or secondary level.
3. Successful completion of the program outlined below.

** Area I

Core Courses

- | | | |
|----------|-------|--|
| ED 460 | (3) | The Exceptional Child |
| ED 471 | (3) | Issues and Trends in Special Education |
| ED 486 | (3) | Curriculum/Materials for Special Education |
| ED 689 | (3) | Individual and Classroom Management |
| * ED 487 | (Arr) | Practicum in Special Education |

**** Area II**

Specialization Courses

ED 604	(3)	Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Deficiencies (elementary emphasis)
ED 607	(3)	Secondary Reading (secondary emphasis)
ED 680	(3)	Theories of Learning Disabilities
ED 682	(3)	Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities
ED 683	(3)	Remediation of Learning Disabilities (elementary emphasis)
ED 685	(3)	Adults and Adolescents with Learning Disabilities (secondary emphasis)

**** Area III**

Practicum

ED 687LD	(6)	Advanced Practicum in Learning Disabilities (elementary or secondary emphasis)
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***** Total** 33-36

* May be waived upon appropriate experience with handicapped students.

** Substitutions must be approved by Special Education faculty.

*** Must total a minimum of 15 credits at UAA and include at least 3 credits in advanced practicum.

The University of Alaska, Anchorage previously had a second program in Special Education in the area of Mental Retardation. This program was also at the graduate level and built upon a background in elementary or secondary education. The University of Alaska, Anchorage has temporarily suspended admission to this program while it is being closely evaluated for updating or elimination. Suggestions by advisory committees and faculty have included possible modification of the program to train teachers to work with lower functioning handicapped students including those labeled as Moderately to Severely impaired. Another option under consideration was a new program at the undergraduate level to offer dual certification with elementary education. A third option under discussion is the development of a separate program or optional strand in the existing program to better train teachers for rural positions in special education.

Future planning also includes changing the present program in Learning Disabilities to a more comprehensive Special Education program including competence for Mild Mental Retardation and Emotional Disturbances.

RESPONSES TO LETTERS

A major source of information for this paper was obtained from agencies and individuals listed in the Procedures section of this report. (Page 2) The information they provided below was grouped to include responses from various respondents as they related to the stated issues. Some issues were combined where there was a natural overlap; each issue will be briefly explained. There is no significance to the order of the issues presented below.

Issue: A Statewide Special Education Certification Program

Explanation: The Special Education Consortium has long considered the possibility of recommending that a single statewide certification program in Special education be based in Anchorage to serve the state's needs by coordinating an approved program which could be partially offered on other in-state university and college campuses, and/or in rural or remote areas. A similar model presently exists through the outreach program from the Anchorage campus to Fairbanks, Kenai and Kodiak.

Response: All recipients receiving this question strongly endorsed the concept of a statewide program in order to develop consistency in program offerings. District and training

institutions hoped that such uniformity could guarantee better basic entry level requirements for new teachers in Special Education. However, many pointed out that while this could help in-state trainers and make the hiring job easier for in-state applicants, it would have no effect on the diversity of skills displayed by new hires to the state from training programs outside of Alaska. In addition, several respondents questioned the advisability of a statewide program for handling both urban and rural competency development.

Issue: Recertification

Explanation: The Alaska requirements for recertification were previously presented. The appropriateness of the requirements for Special Education teachers was solicited.

Response: While the Department of Education indicated that such a requirement was typical, school district respondents felt a greater need to see the requirement tied to self-improvement (based on goal development) or the opportunity to up-grade the level of professional skills in a teacher's given assignment area. Most indicated that the state requirement was "too loose" in this area to serve the districts well.

Issue: The Organization of Teacher Training Programs

Explanation: Teacher training programs can be and are organized in a variety of ways. Some programs are tightly organized

around handicapping conditions such as mental retardation or emotional disturbance while others are arranged around delivery models including resource rooms or self contained classroom teaching. Non-categorical approaches and competency based approaches are becoming increasingly popular.

Response:

All recipients would like to see less emphasis on a categorical organization with several suggesting an alternative to the present practice that would separate the rural and urban teaching emphasis. Competency based education was mentioned by one respondent with all stating that future teachers must have wider training to serve in future classrooms and that rural teachers needed more exposure to low incidence handicaps.

Issue:

Regular Education Exposure for Special Education Teachers

Explanation:

The respondents were asked to consider whether a Special Education teacher needed regular education training or experience.

Response:

With regular teaching training defined flexibility to include options such as methods courses, practicum and/or student teaching, all respondents agreed that special educators, particularly those who serve the more mildly handicapped students, should have exposure to regular education students in this training. It was

suggested that such experience would not be as necessary for a teacher of the severely handicapped. While a number of respondents indicated that they preferred having special educators with dual training in regular education, they did not feel that requiring experience in regular education was practical considering the current lack of Special Education trained personnel available in the state.

Issue: Certification Waivers for Special Education Teachers

Explanation: The impression existed that with the paucity of trained personnel in Special Education in Alaska that there are many teachers presently teaching in Special Education classrooms without an appropriate certificate. How widespread this practice was or how uniform the requirements to obtain a waiver was questioned.

Response: The Department of Education clarified the issue of what was required for a waiver (see Certificated Waivers, p. 8) and indicated that this practice should probably be discontinued. The Anchorage and rural Alaska responses stated frequent use of the procedure particularly for teachers who had some training or were certified from other states, but could not obtain a certificate in Alaska. It is also used for teachers who were in the process of obtaining certificates but had not yet completed full programs. The specific number of

teachers in Special Education without special education certificates was not requested.

Issue: The Relationship of Hiring Practices to Certification

Explanation: The specialization in which a teacher was trained and endorsed appeared to have little relationship to the teaching assignment. For example, teachers with Special Education training and certification in deaf education could be found teaching in programs for the mildly handicapped learning disabled students and those with backgrounds in mental retardation could be found in a variety of teaching assignments.

Response: One of the individuals responding to this issue felt that ideally hiring should match program training but that certification standards frequently didn't assure a level or set of competencies upon which to base hiring decisions. Another felt that the area of specialization was irrelevant as compared with the importance of issues such as teaching experience or the need for broad, general Special Education skills to teach in rural Alaska. All agreed that the hiring issue was much more basic; assuring that teachers hired for Special Education jobs had Special Education certificates from some kind of Special Education program.

Issue: The Relationship of Inservice Training to Certification and/or Recertification

Explanation: Since inservice education is a mandated activity in Special Education programs, the potential for linking professional development activities to the certification and recertification process was questioned.

Response: Several respondents would like to see the relationship of inservice training to recertification explored and more clearly articulated. Similar to the response on recertification, several people felt that inservice and recertification should both be used to keep the Special Education teacher abreast of the contemporary issues and to update professional skills.

Issues: Development of Certification Programs for Alaska

Explanation: The procedure for accrediting programs in Special Education is currently under review. With a new system the potential exists for involving more people in the procedure, for selecting new standards and/or for including emphasis built more specifically around Alaska needs.

Response: All parties addressing this issue referred to the need for more consumer involvement. It was pointed out by several agencies that in a state of this size input from various consumer groups including parents of handicapped

students, native leaders, teachers, University personnel, administrators and the handicapped themselves could easily be involved in the certification development process. One respondent described a "professional standards" state board with subcommittees comprised of "credentialed professional experts" which could gather and react to input that would be used to continually update certification standards.

In a related question, respondents were asked to state a preference for program standards. The NASDTEC standards currently in use were generally seen as acceptable although one person reported a preference for NCATE standards which were viewed as more stringent and generally more widely accepted.

When questioned about whether or not there should be special Alaska certification standards, the responses were mixed. While agreeing that some of the content might be specific, most commented on the need to assure that the teachers would have job mobility with the certificate particularly if they chose to leave Alaska. Everyone stated that the "specialness" was probably restricted to working in rural Alaska and included the need for such content as a greater preparation for teaching in isolation. Teachers also needed to be ready to work in areas with fewer support personnel and faci-

lities. They also needed to be aware and sensitive to the cultural and language pluralism of Alaska. Most respondents found it advisable to train generalists in Special Education for Alaska teaching assignments and several stated that inservice and on-the-job training could better be used to prepare teachers on-site for rural teaching assignments. Respondents indicated that they'd like to see an undergraduate Special Education program available in Alaska and more University affiliated clinical experiences.

A related issue was explored in questions concerned with the need for leadership in future certification program development. Various groups were suggested as having a need for involvement in order to insure that exceptional students were instructed by qualified personnel. They were the Alaska Governor's Council for the Handicapped and Gifted, the University of Alaska and the Department of Education. Other groups were suggested for consumer and advocate input including the Alaska Association of Administrators for Special Education, National Education Association-Alaska, and Alaska and national groups including the Council for Exceptional Children and the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. There was consensus that the major leadership roles must be assumed by the University of Alaska and the Office of Exceptional Children within the Department of Education in order to develop the best teacher training options for Alaska.

CONCLUSION

Special Education certification is a significant issue for many individuals in Alaska. If certification is a confusing issue in Alaska then it follows that people dealing with the problems of certification are frequently frustrated and angered by the system. The Department of Education, the University of Alaska, school district administrators, supervisors and teachers all have opinions about the system and each views the issues from a slightly different perspective. Unfortunately, everyone involved in the certification issue gets blamed for the ills of the system; the Department of Education for not having reciprocity with other states programs or for not evaluating transcripts; the University of Alaska, Anchorage program for alternately being too strict or too loose in the application of standards as they apply to particular individuals; the school districts for various hiring practices including the use of waivers and finally the teachers for not completing approved programs that everyone recognizes as creditable!

In this brief exploration of issues and opinions related to Special Education certification it is obvious that the semantics are confusing but the basic concepts are fairly simple. Much of the confusion exists because there is limited dialog between the concerned parties and therefore the differences become exaggerated and the basic concepts are lost in the resulting miscommunication.

Everyone involved in the certification issue is basically interested in the quality of teaching for the handicapped students. The purpose of Special Education teacher certification is to assure

that teachers hired in Alaska will be able to provide appropriate services. The Department of Education assumes the responsibility to monitor those who are ready to teach through soliciting recommendations from approved programs. The University of Alaska provides training by meeting the standards for an approved program and the school districts make decisions on who teaches by screening applicants to come up with the best possible candidates.

In conclusion, the committee preparing this report recommends that the people most intimately involved with the issue of Special Education teacher certification should also be the parties developing a system that will contain fewer snarls and present the certification concepts in the clearest manner possible. Appreciation is due everyone who assisted by providing information for this report and it is hoped that as a result of this report all parties will have a clearer understanding of each other's perspectives.

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